



COUNTY OF PLACER  
**AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**  
11477 E Avenue ▪ Auburn, CA 95603 ▪ (530) 889-7372  
Rich Ferreira – Citrus                      John Nitta - Nursery  
Patricia Beard -                              Stewart Perry – Ag  
Larry Jordan - Timber                      Jim Brenner – Fruit &  
Wayne Vineyard –                      William Morebeck –  
Patrick Bollinger – Foothill Farms

**MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, January 8, 2018

Placer County Planning Commission Hearing Room

3091 County Center Drive, Auburn, CA

County Contact: Joshua Huntsinger

**Members Present:** Patricia Beard, Patrick Bollinger, Rich Ferreira, Larry Jordan, John Nitta, Stewart Perry, Wayne Vineyard

**Members Absent:** James Brenner, William Morebeck

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- I. CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 pm by Wayne Vineyard**
- II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA FOR, JANUARY 8, 2018 AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 13, 2017.** Motion to approve: *Beard / Ferreira / MPUV*
- III. PUBLIC COMMENT –**

None

**IV. ACTION ITEM**

**DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING POTENTIAL UPDATES TO WILLIAMSON ACT POLICY –** Williamson Act Special Committee as appointed August 14, 2017 – Josh Huntsinger, Agricultural Commissioner

Alex Fisch from Placer County Planning Dept attended to aid in clarification of county code during discussion.

Josh presented draft proposal letter to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) for review with Agricultural Commission members (Commission). Action items in the proposal were discussed and reviewed.

1. Recommendation to amend county policy to require that applicants either meet production requirements at the time they apply or have an established track record of at least three years of farming. No contract approvals based on promises of future performance.
2. Recommendation that any new contracts resulting from the division of an existing contract be required to individually qualify based on their parcel size, gross production value, and farm infrastructure, particularly with regard to their water supply and irrigation systems
3. Recommendation to amend section 17.64.060(C) to require verified on-site farm infrastructure as necessary to sustain the agricultural operation. Infrastructure could include irrigation systems, fencing, buildings, or other permanent facility improvements.



4. Recommendation to amend section 17.64.60(B)(2) to include new contract eligibility definitions including:
  - a. Low Intensity – defined as non-irrigated rangeland with a minimum parcel size of 40 acres and \$4500 of annual gross agricultural production
  - b. Medium Intensity – defined as irrigated pasture capable of supporting 1 Animal Unit (AMU) per acre, or all other field, orchard, or vineyard crops with a minimum parcel size of 20 acres and \$4500 of annual gross agricultural production.
  - c. High Intensity - defined as a minimum 10 acre parcel with irrigated specialty crop production and a gross production value of at least \$10,000 per year.
5. Recommend that the County Assessor increase the level of contract auditing to include some amount of field verification. Consider utilizing extra-help staff and ground-truth 20% of existing contracts for compliance each year. The county could recoup tax revenue by cancelling non-compliant contracts.

DISCUSSION: Alex Fisch clarified which items were already in the code with clear guidelines and those that might be open to some interpretation. Commission talked about creating clearer interpretations via checklists, FAQ sheet and a Fact Sheet that spells out in writing the requirements, provided to applicant at beginning of process.

In regard to item #3 in particular, there are provisions in the county code for inclusion of open space parcels and they can be a good fit for the Williamson Act.

Item #4 would require amendment to the current code.

Discussion of a past cancellation included the idea of an extra form to clarify the details of cancellation. Alex stated this was spelled out within the contract, is inherent in the process, and he would explore the option of more clarification. Josh reminded everyone of the letter the Agricultural Commission sent to the BOS in regard to cancellation. Alex reassured the Commission that, historically, the BOS follows the Commission's judgement. He also stated he is happy to attend future Williamson Act reviews that come before the Commission to be available to clarify the code should the need arise.

During the discussion of Item #5, Alex mentioned Assessor tax valuations are reported to the State, so the idea of an audit may be effective. There are some other issues to consider including early or 10 year cancellation by the County. Josh will further explore this item and report back to the Commission.

**MOTION** by Larry Jordan:

Direct the Agricultural Commissioner to explore the feasibility of a recommendation to amend section 17.64.60(B)(2) to include new contract eligibility definitions as stated in item #4 above.

Seconded by John Nitta and passed without dissent.

**V. PROPOSE MOVING FEBRUARY MEETING TO FEBRUARY 5 OR 26, 2018 DUE TO HOLIDAYS AND COUNTY OFFICES CLOSED – Josh Huntsinger**

Meeting moved to February 5, 2018 – MPUV

## **VI. REPORTS**

### **A. Agricultural Marketing Program – Josh Huntsinger**

Mandarin Season ended, winter season has begun.

- New Graphic Designer for Ag Marketing: Jasmine Ward replaced Carol Perrine - retiree.
- Legacy Videos will feature stories about farming history in Placer County.
- Second Annual Conservator Dinner was held at The Ridge on October 19, 2017
- Vintners Association has a new website: <https://placerwine.com>

### **B. Economic Development Board – Lyndell Grey**

- Absent

### **C. Livestock and Natural Resources Farm Advisor – Dan Macon**

- 11 inches of rain for the season so far. December 5, 2018 is the driest December day on record.
- OES, El Dorado, Nevada and Placer Counties are working together on plans for large animal evacuations.
- January 1, 2018 new law requires prescription for antibiotics.
- Watershed Group meets February 21, 2018 at the MRF.
- Upcoming trainings featured were FBI & USDA training on agriculture epidemics as well as a training/outreach on biosecurity.

### **D. Horticulture and Small Farms Advisor – Cindy Fake**

Cindy presented the upcoming farming workshops as well as producer's workshops and:

Mandarins experienced heavy crop loss due to November rains, remaining fruit was huge. Reporting on mandarin trials in the works.

Bulk citrus quarantine in effect for all of Placer County. Makes transport of citrus within county easier.

Temperature changes wreaking a bit of havoc on crops. Stone fruit and citrus blooming. Stone fruit may be adversely affected. Rich Ferreira adds that some of his trees grew up to 1 foot in the warm weather.

### **E. Water Supply Update – Josh Huntsinger**

- Josh shared written reports from NID and PCWA (summarized below). More snow needed, currently raining at higher elevations. However, if water meets average accumulation levels, no issues anticipated. Water Agencies have been invited to present at the April 2018 commission meeting.
- NID Report: As of 1/3/18, storage = 211,785 AF; 78% of capacity and 134% of average for this date. Precipitation at Bowman = 25.1"; 95% of average. December was noticeably dry with only 1.21" of precipitation. NID does not do January 1 snow surveys, but based on the automated sites and observations the snowpack is well below average. However; it is early and no reason not to stay optimistic that conditions will improve. With our reservoirs being above

average in storage we do not necessarily need an average year in order to be able to make full deliveries.

- PCWA sent a graph showing rainfall and accumulation percentages of average. As of January 6, 2018 water storage was on track for overall average water storage. Snow surveys not completed at this time. As of January 1, 2018 – Overall capacity at 54.5% with overall average at 114.6%
- PCWA price increases – Large agriculture customers southwest of Lincoln may see increase of 90% making rice growing unsustainable. Negotiations between Placer County and PCWA in process on this topic.
- PNSSNS meeting on February 21, 2018

## **VII. AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS – Josh Huntsinger**

- ACP Regional Quarantine: Meeting January 9, 2018 with growers to review. Quarantine applies to nursery stock and bulk citrus. Commercially cleaned and packed citrus is not under quarantine.
- Pesticide use near schools in effect as of January 1, 2018. Soil fumigations, air blast, aerial, and air sprayers are limited to outside the hours of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Growers within one-quarter mile must submit usage to schools – outreach plan in progress. There are a few affected schools in Placer County. Pesticide applications on school farms are already regulated, this is a new regulation.
- Toured the only medical marijuana dispensary in Placer County which is located in Colfax.
- Placer County Air Quality Control looking into non-commercial fuel (gas) storage (farming). 250 gallon or less is exempt. Storage over 250 gallons may qualify for agricultural exemption, but only if all stored fuel is used on site – not on highways. Erik White, Air Quality Control manager, invited to February meeting to report on this new program.
- Form 700 (Conflict of Interest) filing due, watch your email for notice and file as soon as possible. Due no later than April 2, 2018.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT– 9:02 p.m.**

Next meeting February 5, 2018 at 7:00 p.m